

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, we are looking at the last week perhaps of our session, and I think we can look back at some accomplishments. I think we can take some comfort in the fact that when this Congress sat in January, 11 months ago, Americans were losing their jobs at 20,000 every single day.

Because of the stimulus bill, that has slowed and almost stopped. The stimulus bill is rebuilding bridges in my district, rebuilding highways, and rebuilding community health clinics. But slowing the rate at which Americans lose their job is nobody's idea of a Christmas present. We have hard work to do.

I had occasion in church this week-end to hear the words of Handel's "Messiah," "and the government shall be upon his shoulders." That is prophetic, meaning in the future. Right now, the government is on our shoulders. And I hope that when we reconvene in January, we set aside the partisanship, the misinformation, and the anger to get back to the serious business of creating jobs for the American people.

THE DEBT CEILING AND DEFENSE SPENDING

(Mr. OLSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, in what has become a familiar move, House Democrats have decided to increase spending yet again. But sadly, they have opted to shut out debate on this matter by attaching a \$300 billion increase in our Nation's debt ceiling to the Defense appropriations bill. They know they will have serious trouble getting support to increase our Nation's debt limit, so they are using our troops to carry them.

This is one of the reasons the American people are fed up with Congress. And as a Navy veteran, I can assure you that exploiting funding for our troops is both deplorable and demoralizing, and I will continue to oppose such actions.

We owe the American people, our children, our grandchildren, and the men and women risking their lives in defense of our freedom better than this. At Christmas, we should be hanging ornaments on a tree, not massive spending bills on the back of our troops.

THE WALL STREET REFORM BILL

(Mr. ARCURI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, last week, I was proud to stand up with many of my colleagues and hold Wall Street accountable for their reckless actions that led us into the biggest financial collapse in the last 50 years. For too long, Wall Street banks were allowed to put short-term profits ahead of long-

term stability under the Bush administration and reaped record profits as a result of their risky and out-of-control behavior.

When the markets collapsed out from under them, this country's hard-working citizens were forced to suffer the consequences. The Wall Street reform bill we passed increases enforcement and makes necessary reforms to hold Wall Street accountable so that it can never again recklessly gamble with our financial health and safety.

The bill also creates a new Consumer Financial Protection Agency to prevent borrowers from taking loans that they can't afford and holding risky lenders liable for their practices. The CFPA will also protect families and small businesses from irresponsible lending practices by ensuring that bank loans, mortgages, and credit cards are fair and easy to understand.

Finally, this bill makes it clear that Wall Street will no longer be receiving any sort of taxpayer-funded bailouts. The American people have pulled together and selflessly acted to help this great country. It is time for Wall Street to step up and do the same.

GET THE GOVERNMENT OFF OUR BACKS

(Mr. GINGREY of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Member from Connecticut just said it's prophetic that the government should be on our shoulders. Unfortunately, the government is on our backs, and it shouldn't be. And no better example of that is this massive health care reform bill, a complete government takeover of health care, bureaucrats coming between doctors and patients.

People in this country have spoken loudly, but the Democratic majority is not listening.

In my 11th Congressional District of Georgia, Mr. Speaker, there are 95,000 people on Medicare, and 13,000 of them, 14 percent of the total, get their coverage under Medicare Advantage. That will be taken away from them as we strip \$120 billion out of the Medicare Advantage program.

What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that those 13,000 people in my district will have to pay an additional \$180 a month for the Medicare fee-for-service coverage if they can find a doctor that will take them. They will have to buy a prescription drug plan at \$30 a month and buy a supplemental Medigap plan to cover many of the things that are covered under Medicare Advantage without additional cost. That policy will cost them \$150 a month. That's why the American people are outraged over this plan.

Listen up, Members. Vote "no."

REGULATORY REFORM

(Mr. ALTMIRE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ALTMIRE. Mr. Speaker, it was not long ago that our economy bottomed out and we were on the brink of an economic catastrophe. We avoided a complete collapse, but that is little consolation to the Americans who lost trillions of dollars in retirement savings due to the years of reckless behavior on Wall Street.

As we continue to show positive signs in our economy, this House last week passed legislation to make sure that we never again find ourselves in such a dire situation. The regulatory reform bill we passed creates an orderly process through which large, failing financial institutions can effectively be dismantled. No more "too big to fail." We end taxpayer bailouts by ensuring that in the future, Wall Street, not the taxpayers, will pay to dismantle endangered firms. And we end the predatory lending practices that helped cause the crisis by requiring banks to ensure that they only lend to borrowers who can actually repay the loans.

These changes are long overdue but come just in time for the American taxpayer.

RECOVERY ACT DIAGNOSIS

(Mr. BROUN of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I'm a family doctor. I have examined the Pelosi and Reid health care bills, and I have made a diagnosis, and the American people need to listen up to this diagnosis.

If you like your health insurance today, the price is going to skyrocket, and you're not going to be able to keep it eventually. If you're on Medicare, you're going to have a hard time finding a doctor that will accept Medicare because of the massive cuts. If you're a veteran and dependent upon TRICARE, forget it.

Mr. Speaker, my prescription is that we need to trash the Reid and Pelosi health care bills, work in a bipartisan manner, do this in an incremental way to lower the cost to everybody, and work to make something that makes sense for the American public and keeps the good quality health care we have in America.

RECOVERY ACT REPORT

(Mrs. KIRKPATRICK of Arizona asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, last week, I released a report outlining how the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has benefited greater Arizona and identifying where improvements can be made. I surveyed

communities receiving recovery funds across my district to bring more transparency and oversight into the process.

I found significant progress has been made in bringing jobs to greater Arizona with 1,098 jobs created or saved in District One. Support to our State also prevented deep cuts in Arizona's education and public safety funding.

However, delays were reported on more than 40 percent of projects, despite the hard work of local officials. Our rural communities are finding the bureaucracy to be an obstacle.

I will continue working with local officials and Federal agencies to allow greater Arizona to take full advantage of the Recovery Act so they can create more jobs and get folks back to work.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CUELLAR). The Chair will remind all Members not to traffic the well while another Member is under recognition.

THE NATIONAL DEBT

(Mr. SMITH of Nebraska asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, since 2007, our national debt has increased 39 percent from nearly \$9 trillion to more than \$12 trillion. This works out to be \$39,000 for every man, woman, and child in America just to pay off our country's debt. Now there is a push to increase our Nation's debt ceiling to \$13.9 trillion, despite warnings this increase will be harmful to the U.S. economy.

At a time of double-digit unemployment and with more than 2.6 million jobs lost since the so-called stimulus was passed by Congress, isn't it time we institute fiscally sound policies?

Over the last 11 months, the American people have seen unprecedented spending from Washington, D.C. They are certainly not impressed. They know any economic recovery starts with tax relief for working families and small businesses and fiscal discipline from Washington.

TRANSPARENT HEALTH CARE REFORM

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me say that when Democrats gather, good things happen for the American people. Our health care bill is a bill that will bring down premiums, save lives, and create a magnificent reform comparable to saving lives when Medicare was passed in 1965. It is only those who are scared and apprehensive and not ready to go forward for the American people that won't

allow us to move forward on the health care reform.

Just as when we gather together behind closed doors, Democrats, again, are promoting transparent legislation and creating jobs for Americans. We stand with the small businesses in providing them more resources and credits because they are the backbone of America. We realize that job training, and specifically a bill that I am offering that says that if you're unemployed and get unemployment compensation, you can be in a scholarship program that will train you for the jobs of the future.

The health care bill will be providing jobs on top of jobs: health care jobs, nursing, doctors, and physician assistants. Americans need jobs, and Democrats are not afraid to take the risks that are necessary to provide for them.

As we pass the appropriations bill, we are creating jobs for America, and, therefore, I'm asking my colleagues to assist and not cast about the fears of doom. We are moving this economy. We are helping health care. We are providing the opportunities for America. And I am glad to be a Democrat serving on behalf of the American people.

UNITED NATIONS SOVEREIGNTY

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, what is the proper function of the United Nations? Is it a forum for countries to come together to promote peace, security, and human rights? Or is it an independent entity that determines and establishes the law and regulations to govern member states?

General Secretary Ban Ki-moon has made it clear in recent comments that the U.N. Climate Summit in Copenhagen will not be successful unless a firm deadline for a legally binding agreement is in place.

In Copenhagen, the U.N. is advocating for U.N. bureaucrats with the legal power to regulate the actions of member states. We should not let the health of our economy rest on the collective decisions of a group containing antagonistic and autocratic governments who do not have the American people's interests at heart, let alone the interests of their own citizens.

Do we really want Burma, Iran, and North Korea and other despotic governments setting the rules that govern how American businesses operate? I certainly do not.

100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF MCALLEN MONITOR

(Mr. HINOJOSA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I, together with Congressman HENRY CUELLAR, rise to honor the McAllen

Monitor newspaper in McAllen, Texas, on its 100-year anniversary. Since its first issue on December 11, 1909, the McAllen Monitor has been a round-the-clock operation.

It began as a weekly newspaper. Its reporters recorded the events when McAllen became incorporated in 1911. The Monitor was there to record the history of the Rio Grande Valley and its people. The names of the pioneering families leave a roadmap all across the Rio Grande Valley, families like the Canales, the Guerras, the Lopezes, the Cuellars, the de la Garzas, the McAllens, the Youngs, the Closners, the Sharys, the Hinojosas, and the Bentsens.

Now a daily paper, the McAllen Monitor takes pride in telling the success stories of homegrown people who have become famous, from Narciso Martinez, el Huracan del Valle's accordion sounds to Kris Kristofferson singing and acting; from Bobby Morrow's Olympic Gold Medal to the distinguished political career of the late Senator Lloyd Bentsen.

The McAllen Monitor has covered the good and bad, the sad and the joyous news for 100 years. Congratulations to the McAllen Monitor on its 100-year anniversary.

□ 1030

DEMOCRATS' ABSURD AGENDA

(Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, some days ago, when we were discussing and debating and voting on the health care bill, I got a call in my office from one of my constituents. After we had spoken for some time, he said, I have a confession to make. He said, I voted for President Obama because I thought that he would bring us together and that there was hope. But then he said these words, But I did not vote for this madness.

What did he mean? I guess maybe he was talking about a health care bill that's going to cost more money, going to raise taxes, and not going to take care of all Americans. I guess he was talking about a cap-and-trade bill that will put a burden on every single American. I guess he was talking about a proposal that comes to us that says, oh, we have a huge deficit and we're going to work our way out by spending more. And I suppose he may have been here to hear one of my colleagues just a moment ago who said, When Democrats meet behind closed doors, they come out for transparency. It seems absurd, perhaps because it is.

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, the 111th Congress has made historical progress